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Fr. Dimitry Dudko: Letter from Exile

LETTERS

A LETTER FROM EXILE

From Father Dimitry Dudko

Ed. note: The letters, articles and books of Fr. Dimitry are already well known in the West; they breathe a spirit of heartfelt, suffering Christianity that is rarely seen in our age of coldness and calculation. Although he is a priest of the Moscow Patriarchate, Fr. Dimitry is very sympathetic to the Catacomb Church of Russia and offers in his writings a criticism of the "Sergianism" of his own bishops that is so outspoken that it points to his basic oneness of mind with the anti-Sergianist movement in the Russian Church. As the year 1980 was dawning, Fr. Dimitry was arrested as a part of the new Soviet crackdown on religious and other "dissidents," including the Moscow priest Fr. Gleb Yakunin. This letter was written to a priest in America of the Russian Church Outside of Russia just before his arrest, on December 20, 1979.

I have a desire: what should we do so that our Christian land (which has become atheist) should come to the thousandth year of Christianity (in Russia, 1988) with new powers? For us the new year, 1980, will probably be very difficult. Already several have been arrested, and I was called for interrogation as a witness, and perhaps also as one accused; they brought forward my "Reply to the letters of my spiritual children" and "They want to judge me!" I refused to give an answer. They cannot be satisfied; if not this way, then they will proceed in another way. And they have already started; I have mentioned this in the latest issues of my newspaper.* But all this is nothing if we will be one . . .

Orthodoxy and Russia—this is what I stand on. I will add: Russia not simply as a State, but Russia as a soil for Orthodoxy. To say "Orthodoxy" for me is the same as to say "Russia." Without Russia, Orthodoxy for me could be an abstract concept. But let no one misunderstand me here: without man, faith can be simply a sound. If I will simply speak of Orthodoxy and not see suffering Russia, Orthodoxy for me could be something of the head . . .

If something happens to me, let this be my word from exile. I ask your prayers . . .

I had just finished this letter to you when I received some unconsoling news. Right now all over Moscow there is occurring a transfer of priests. They are sending priests of such a sort that they inspire nothing but horror in the parishes. Now it is clear why the authorities have hidden away Fr. Gleb (Yakunin)—so there will be less publicity about this. They want to strangle the last strength we have, and how sad it is that this is being done precisely by the hands of the church authorities. The decree is issued in the name of the Patriarch, but it is signed by the one temporarily in charge of the Moscow Patriarchate,

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* *In the Light of the Transfiguration,* a weekly leaflet Fr. Dimitry has issued in samizdat since September, 1978; four issues of this "newspaper" have been translated into English and published in *Nikodemos,* 1979, no. 3.

From this day, from this hour,
from this minute, let us strive
to love God above all,
and fulfill His holy will.

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Blessed Theoktista Michaelovna

III.

(*Continued from issue no.* 78)

At the time when Archbishop Peter and Bishop Alexis were in Voronezh, a remarkable holy woman lived there, a fool for Christ, the blessed Theoktista Michaelovna.

The following two accounts come from two former residents of Voronezh, who personally knew the blessed one. The first, Archimandrite Mitrophan of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk church in San Francisco, spiritual son of the late wonderworker Archbishop John Maximovitch, told us the following:

Blessed Theoktista of Voronezh

It is difficult for a man to drive pride away from himself, to kill it. Human nature does not endure accusations and will always try to defend itself, to answer the accusation, even if it is correct. But the path of fools for Christ is a special one, the straightest one to God. They delight in hurting their pride. Theoktista Michaelovna deliberately drew persecutions on herself; many mocked her, hated her, and even beat her.

Who she was or where she came from—no one knew. It was said that she had been the wife of a high-ranking naval officer who died in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), and that after this tragedy, becoming disillusioned in the solidity of earthly life, she directed the gaze of her heart on high and took upon herself the exploit of foolishness for the sake of Christ. God rewarded her with a gift of clairvoyance with which she helped her suffering neighbors.

She was small of stature, skinny, worn out, with noble features in her face. She lived in the Voronezh Monastery of St. Alexis until it was closed (1931), and then took shelter with various people. She had literally "nowhere to lay her head." She lived from time to time also in Novocherkassk, where she was very respected. It is said that she was received there by the Ataman (General) of the Don Cossacks; despite the armed guard around his house, she went everywhere freely, even to his private rooms. It was not for nothing that she was comforting people in Novocherkassk, for there were frightful catastrophes there; the town was almost entirely wiped out by the communists because the Cossacks had been a great support for the Tsarist government and were suspected to be a threat due to their freedom-loving spirit. Both in Voronezh and Novocherkassk she had her own circle of people whom she would visit.

I knew her from my childhood. I remember how one time my mother brought me to the Monastery to visit her. We had tea in her quarters, and she herself waited on me and poured tea.

In Voronezh there was an outstanding pastor, Archpriest Mitrofan, who greatly respected her and received her with great honor. He also died as a martyr in 1931.

She had a special appearance. She would wear soldier's boots of the largest possible size, always leaving the laces untied. She would walk intentionally through puddles; the boots would become filled with water and she would keep right on walking.

She had a cane—a stick with a top on it, just a dry branch, and she would always take this stick with her. But always her noble, aristocratic origin was apparent. She would walk and be swearing a blue streak—but at the same time she would be looking with the kindest eyes. While walking she would close windows along the street with the stick. She was a noisy one. She loved me very much and often visited me.

Theoktista Michaelovna's most striking gift was that of clairvoyance, which she manifested in her last years with special clarity. Here are some cases which I personally witnessed.

1. It was already the frightful Soviet times, the 1920's. My father was a priest and I was afraid for him. After a long separation from him, I somehow managed to come and stay with him. I greatly rejoiced at meeting my relatives again. One morning Theoktista Michaelovna sent the woman who served her to demand that I leave my father immediately and come to her. I did not want to do this at all, since the times were dangerous and I had come for a short time.

She went away and after some time came back with the same command from Theoktista Michaelovna. This happened three times at short intervals, until I finally went. I was thinking: "What can be so urgent?" But she was just sitting by the samovar and, in the calmest way, just as if nothing had happened, she poured some tea and offered refreshments, and conducted a quiet conversation on the weather, and inquired how I was getting along. I had to humble myself and submit.

In an hour my mother came in tears: it turned out that no sooner had I obeyed and gone to Theoktista Michaelovna than our house had been surrounded and after a thorough search my father had been arrested. Despite all attempts, I was never able to find out anything more about his fate. If I had been home they would have taken me too—Theoktista Michaelovna's clairvoyance saved my life. Then she took on a totally different air and advised me to leave the city as quickly as possible.

2. The next incident concerns the death of my mother. I loved my mother very much and suffered terribly when she died. I was always repulsed

by alcoholic beverages and never had any desire for them. But when I heard that my mother had died, in my grief I was so outraged at all the inhuman conditions of the Soviet daily struggle that surrounded me that out of despair I couldn't endure it any longer, and I went out and got drunk—so badly that I barely managed to get home to my apartment. Theoktista Michaelovna had a certain chaste woman of high education who devoted her whole life to the blessed one; she was called Anna Vasilievna. And so I wrote a letter to this Anna Vasilievna about my great sorrow over my mother's death, and asked that she inform Theoktista Michaelovna that my mother had died. And soon I received a letter from Anna Vasilievna where it was written: "Theoktista Michaelovna asks me to tell you that she cannot stand drunkards." And so, in her clairvoyance, she had seen what I was doing.

3. I was working in Orel, where I had a temporary out-of-town job. When it was discovered that I was the son of a priest, they kept back my pay; this continued for several months. I had no money, and my family was very concerned over what I should do next.

I wrote a letter to Anna Vasilievna for Theoktista Michaelovna. In a few days I received a reply: "Theoktista Michaelovna asks that you be told that she has made arrangements for you to be paid." At this time I was in the town of Eletz.

I regained hope and went to the telephone station to call the pay office in Orel and to find out what the situation was with regard to my payment. And they said: "Where are you? We have been searching for you to pay you." And I received everything in full, as I never had before. And so dear Theoktista Michaelovna had indeed "made arrangements."

4. Once I was walking with Theoktista Michaelovna on the street, and a well-dressed young woman, full of health, was coming towards us. Evidently something had been revealed about her to Theoktista Michaelovna, because all of a sudden she hit the woman on the back with all her might, and then added a strong, uncensored word, apparently corresponding to her secret vice. The woman froze on the spot, but then continued on her way, since she apparently knew what she was being punished for.

Anna Vasilievna related that Theoktista Michaelovna did not sleep nights, but would spend them in prayer and vigil. When she went visiting she would pretend to pick insects off herself and kill them, and all the time she would scratch. Of course, people judged her for this. When she was with outsiders, she would often begin to speak all manner of nonsense, and sometimes would spit with an oath. But as soon as the outsiders would leave, a

coherent conversation of a clairvoyant eldress would begin. She had a remarkable mind and a refined way of expressing her thoughts and feelings. It was apparent she was well bred.

There was a great public square in Voronezh; on one side of it were the buildings of the Party's Regional Committee, and the Regional Executive Committee, and here there were monuments to Lenin and Stalin. Chekist guards were standing everywhere. Once she went up to these monuments and in front of everyone relieved herself; a puddle formed. She was immediately taken to Cheka headquarters, and there, in the Chief's office, she made an even bigger mess right on his desk with all its papers. She was detained and then released as abnormal.

She had a friend Anisia, who very much loved her. Once this Anisia became ill and was preparing to die, since no one could help her. Theoktista Michaelovna came to her and was told that Anisia was dying. "She's pretending," replied Theoktista Michaelovna, then went up to her, took her by the hand (and it was evident that she was really dying) and said: "Aniska, get up!" The latter instantly got up and began to prepare a meal for them, and all her disease was finished. This was in Voronezh.

A certain woman was subjected to a search by the police. She had a small store of money which she had hidden in a purse on a shelf. Suddenly the police came and the search began. Mentally she cried out for help: "Theoktista Michaelovna, save me!" The one conducting the search touched the purse but saw nothing. He moved the whole buffet and all the shelves, but didn't find the money.

Another testimony of Theoktista Michaelovna is given by a spiritual daughter of Archbishop Peter (Zverev) in Voronezh in the 1920's; she is now a nun residing in a California convent, Mother X.

I see her, the blessed Theoktista Michaelovna, before my eyes as if it were yesterday, although such a long time has passed since I saw her last in the city of Voronezh. She was of short stature, dressed in a long skirt and a coat of some dark, ugly color; on her head were many heavy kerchiefs, as though there were something wrong with her, or she were sick. She didn't walk on the sidewalk, but mostly right on the street. She was always accompanied by some woman, perhaps a nun or a novice from the Protection Convent of the Mother of God where the blessed Theoktista lived amidst the remaining sisters who had not yet been arrested and banished into exile. The Con-

vent had been closed by the Soviets long before, and had been turned into a so-called "workers' village," its houses rented out to laymen.

Theoktista Michaelovna lived in one of the cells of the Convent. Since laymen lived there now, and the school children were indoctrinated with communist propaganda, the blessed one was often seen being followed by a band of boys—young hoodlums. Usually she would disregard them, but sometimes she would stop, turn to them and say something to them. We saw her from afar, for to come close to her was a bit risky, since she was known to all to be just crazy. There were families which she visited, and perhaps she would stay sometimes with some of them. She was known to all the older residents as a holy woman and was highly respected.

When Bishop Peter of Voronezh was arrested by the GPU on November 10/23, 1925, his flock suffered bitterly over the separation from him and appealed to blessed Theoktista. "Will Vladika return soon?" they asked; "when will Vladika come?" She replied: "He will come when we're eating meat." And in fact, her words were fulfilled precisely; the GPU did not detain him long, and he returned home, arriving in Voronezh in time for the funeral of Metropolitan Vladimir of Voronezh on December 28, during the fast-free week after the feast of the Nativity of Christ.

On February 2, 1926, Bishop Peter was raised to the rank of Archbishop of Voronezh, and he began to live then in a small house not far from the St. Alexis Monastery. Here Theoktista Michaelovna constantly visited him—evidently, he was a friend of the blessed one. She would go straight to his cell and sit on his bed, where she would wait until Vladika would send away those who were constantly coming to him. She would call Vladika always by his first name and patronymic.

I also remember that in the upper church of the St. Alexis Monastery, dedicated to the Resurrection of Christ, there were two wonderworking icons of the Mother of God: the "Life-giving Fount" on a high place on the right side, to which little steps led with a metal railing, and at the same elevation on the left side, the Mother of God "of Three Hands." One day everyone in the church was very upset at the behavior of Theoktista Michaelovna: she got up on the high place to the icon of the "Three Hands" and stood with her back to the icon and began to bawl somebody out with some rather crude language. A short time later some thieves broke into the sacristy, sawed through the iron grating in the window, and stole something valuable. Then people understood that this act of hers referred to those evil-doers.

It was said that if she gave you bread, it was a good sign. People tell how once she was drinking tea at the place of one of the sisters in the Convent, when suddenly she leapt up and poured water from a dish out the window into the yard; at this very time someone nearby had a fire in a chimney and Theoktista Michaelovna was "putting out the fire" by this gesture.

Once she refused to take a bread-roll from one woman, saying "You will need it yourself; you will live for so-many days (she gave the number) without anything else—you will have nothing else to eat." This happened just as she said.

The righteous Theoktista saw the rapid liquidation of the Orthodox churches and monuments of Voronezh in the 1930's, which was only a part of the satanic program that was conducted all over the much-suffering Russian land, to the appalled outrage of almost the whole Russian people. The reign of terror took such proportions that people thought some madmen had gotten loose and seized the reins of government. Thousands of people were being arrested at random and thrown into prisons without any idea why. Professor P. Kusakov of South America, then a young man, who still remembers the blessed Theoktista well, tells us that it was like a psychotic nightmare, after which people became stupified and indifferent to everything. Those few who remained free had only one thought: how to survive and take care of their shattered close ones. In addition to all this, a man-made famine was raging all over the southern region, which had always been the most fertile part of Russia, when thousands of innocent people died from starvation.

All this the blessed Theoktista saw well and co-suffered with the remaining Christians. By the mid-1930's all churches were closed, levelled by dynamite or turned into factory storehouses. Christianity went deep underground and the few faithful could steal away to church services only deep in the night. The heart of the blessed one, which inspired so many good deeds for her neighbors, could not endure any longer. One day blood rushed to her throat, and on February 22, 1936 (O.S.), Theoktista Michaelovna died. It was said that before her death she dressed all in white to meet her Bridegroom, Christ, and died in the Convent. She was buried in the cemetery outside the city and her memory was erased from Voronezh. But the Christian conscience bears her image in loving hearts throughout the world, wherever there is knowledge and understanding of Russia's Catacomb Saints.

VITA PATRUM

THE LIFE OF THE FATHERS

By Saint Gregory of Tours

CHAPTER SEVEN

Saint Gregory the Bishop

INCORRUPT WONDERWORKER OF LANGRES

MEN OF PERFECT SANCTITY, whom the palm of perfect blessedness has raised from earth to heaven, are those who are bound by the bond of true charity, who are enriched by the fruits of almsgiving, who are adorned by the flower of chastity, who are crowned by the determined combat of martyrdom, or, finally, those whose principal desire, in order to begin the work of perfect justice, was above all to make of their bodies a spotless temple prepared for the Holy Spirit and thus to arrive at the summit of the other virtues. And therefore, having become their own persecutors, while they were destroying the vices within themselves, being tested like the martyrs, they triumphantly finished the course of their lawful combat—which no one would be able to do without God's help, without being protected by the shield and helmet of the Divine assistance, and which one does not achieve himself but imputes to the glory of the Divine Name, according to the Apostle's word: *He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord* (I Cor. 1:31). It is in this that the blessed Gregory sought all his glory, he who from the high authority of senatorial rank lowered himself to such humility that, disdaining all the cares of this world, he devoted himself entirely to the work of God which he kept in his heart.

1. Saint Gregory, then, who was among the foremost senators and well versed in letters, rose to the dignity of Count of the city of Autun and administered the region for forty years with justice. He was so rigorous

and severe toward malefactors that there was hardly a single one who could escape him. He had a wife named Armentaria, of senatorial lineage, whom he is said to have known only for the begetting of children. God granted him sons, and it never came to him to burn for another woman, as often happens in the ardor of youth.

2. After his wife's death he turned towards the Lord, and after having been chosen by the people he was ordained bishop of Langres. Great was his abstinence, but lest it be imputed to pride, he hid smaller barley loaves under his wheaten loves; then, breaking and giving the wheat bread to others, he would secretly take the barley bread for himself without anyone knowing about it. He did the same with wine: if the cup-bearer presented him with water, in order to conceal this fact he would choose a cup opaque enough to hide the transparency of the water. He was so devoted to and energetic in fasting, almsgiving, prayer, and vigils, that he shone forth as a hermit placed in the middle of the world. Indeed, since he ordinarily abode in the castle of Dijon, and his house was next to the baptistery where the relics of many Saints were kept, he would rise from his bed during the night without anyone noticing and, having only God for witness, would go to pray in the baptistery, whose door would open miraculously, and where he would sing psalms with heedfulness.

But after he had done this for a long period of time, finally he was seen and recognized by a deacon: when the latter saw him act thus, he followed him at a distance and saw what he was doing, without the blessed man being aware of him. And the deacon said that when the Saint of God came to the baptistery door, after he struck it with his hand the door opened without anyone appearing to open it, and that after he went in, there was silence for a very long time, but then there was heard a psalmody of several voices for the space of more than three hours. I believe that since there were in that place the relics of many Saints, they revealed themselves to this blessed man in order to sing psalms to the Lord with him. And when he had finished, he would go back to his bed and lie down with so much care that no one knew anything. In the morning the custodians, finding the door closed, would open it with the key as usual and ring the bell, and the Saint of God would go there again with the others for the Divine Office.

The first day of his episcopate, when the demoniacs were confessing their possession, the priests requested him to agree to give them his blessing, which he emphatically refused to do, lest vainglory assail him, proclaiming himself unworthy to be the minister for the manifestation of miracles

of the Lord. Nevertheless, not being able to refuse them for too long, he had the possessed ones brought; then, without touching them, but only employing the word and the sign of the Cross, he commanded the demons to depart. Immediately upon hearing this, they abandoned the bodies which they had bound in malice. Even in his absence, many would stop the demoniacs and expel the demons by making the sign of the Cross with the staff he customarily carried in his hand. Moreover, if a sick person carried away something from his bed, it was a sure remedy for him. His granddaughter Armentaria* was once seized in her youth by a severe attack of quartan fever, and having received no relief from the repeated attention of the physicians, she was often exhorted by the blessed confessor himself to apply herself to prayer. One day she wished to lie down in his bed, and then her fever disappeared so completely that she never suffered from it again.

3. Saint Gregory, having gone to the city of Langres for the holy day of Epiphany, was seized by a slight attack of fever, at the end of which he left this world and went to Christ. His blessed face was so adorned with glory after death that it resembled roses. His cheeks were red, whereas the rest of his body was as white as a lily, so that you would have thought him already prepared for the future resurrection. As they were taking him to the castle of Dijon, where he had ordered himself buried in that plain to the north, right near the castle, the pall-bearers could not hold up the coffin and set it on the ground; and then, after regaining their strength, they picked it up and bore it into the church which is within the city walls.

The bishops having arrived on the fifth day, he was brought from the church to the Basilica of Saint John. Those held in the prison began to cry out to the blessed body, saying, "Have mercy on us, most pious lord, in order that those whom you did not deliver while you were in this world you may free now that, being dead, you possess the heavenly kingdom. Visit us, we beg you, and have mercy on us." As they were crying these and other similar things, the body grew heavy, so that the pall-bearers could not hold it up. Placing the coffin on the ground, they awaited a miracle of the blessed bishop. While they were waiting, all at once the prison doors opened, and the beam to which the prisoners' feet were fixed broke in the middle. The bonds snapped and the chains broke, and all were freed and rushed without hindrance toward the blessed body. The bearers then easily raised the coffin and the prisoners followed it with the others; later they were dismissed by the judge without penalty.

* The mother of St. Gregory of Tours.

4. After this, the blessed confessor manifested himself by many miracles. A certain monk said that on the day of his burial he had seen the heavens opened; nor is it to be doubted that after these angelic actions our Saint had been admitted into the heavenly assemblies. A prisoner was brought to the aforesaid castle by the same way by which they had brought the Saint's body from Langres. And as the soldiers, going ahead on horseback, were dragging the prisoner behind their backs, they came to the place where the limbs of the blessed confessor had rested. As they passed by, the prisoner invoked the blessed bishop's name and asked that he would free him in his mercy. While he was thus praying, the bonds fell from his hands. Perceiving himself released, he remained quiet, and since his hands were covered, he was thought still to be bound. But after they had gone through the castle gate and had come before the atrium of the church, he dashed off, holding in his hand the thong with which those who were dragging him had bound him, and he was delivered by the help of Almighty God and by the intercession of the blessed hierarch.

Admirable also is that miracle by which his blessed body appeared glorious when it was being translated after a long time. Since the holy hierarch had been buried in a corner of the basilica, and it was a small space so that the people could not approach it as devotion demanded, Saint Tetricus, his son and successor, took note of this, and seeing miracles being worked unceasingly at his tomb, he knocked down the foundations of that part of the basilica before the altar and there laid out an apse which he constructed in the round with admirable workmanship. When the circular wall was finished, he pulled down the old high wall and built an arch. When the building and its ornamentation were done, he excavated in the middle of the apse a crypt, wishing to place in it the body of his blessed father.

He called together for this office the priests and abbots, who assiduously prayed that the blessed confessor would permit himself to be transferred to the place prepared for him. The next morning, with chanting choirs, they took the sarcophagus from before the altar and transported it into the apse which the holy bishop had built. But as they were arranging the sepulchre carefully, suddenly, by God's command—as I believe—the cover of the sarcophagus fell off to one side, and behold! the blessed face of the Saint appeared, whole and intact, so that you would have thought him to be not dead, but sleeping. Nor was there any deterioration in the vestments which had been put on him. Thus it was not without reason that he appeared glorious after his death, since his flesh had not been corrupted by passions. And certainly, great is the integrity of body and heart which preserves

grace in this world and is given eternal life in the future age, of which the Apostle Paul speaks: *Follow peace and holiness, without which no man shall see the Kingdom of God.* (Heb. 12:14).

5. One Sunday a girl was grooming her hair with a comb. Because of the injury—so I believe—she was doing to the holy day, the comb stuck to her hands in such a way that the teeth entered her fingers and the palm of her hand, which caused her great pain. After she had made the round of the basilicas of the Saints, weeping and praying, she prostrated herself at the tomb of the blessed Gregory, full of confidence in his virtue. And after she had begged the blessed confessor's help for a long time, the comb fell out and her hand was restored to its original condition. The possessed, also, confessing his name at his sepulchre, were often cleansed. And several times since his death we have seen that by touching such ones with the staff which he carried in his hand (of which we spoke earlier), they became so fastened to the walls that you would have thought they had been held by large stakes well sharpened on the ends.

6. We know many other deeds of his, but lest they incite fatigue, we have spoken briefly only of a few out of many. He died in the thirty-third year of his episcopate and the ninetieth of his age, this man who often made himself known by manifest miracles.

NOTES

St. Gregory of Langres was born about 450, was Count of Autun from about 466 to 506, was elected bishop of Langres in 506 or 507, and died in 539 or 540. He was the grandfather of St. Gregory of Tours' own mother, Armentaria. He is commemorated on January 4; evidently he died just before Epiphany, on the road to Langres.

St. Tetricus, the son of St. Gregory of Langres and grand uncle of St. Gregory of Tours, succeeded his father as bishop of Langres and ruled in this capacity from about 540 to his death in 572 or 573. He is commemorated on March 18.

The "baptistery" where St. Gregory prayed secretly at night in Dijon was probably the oratory of St. Vincent, which existed up to the 17th century. The nearby church of St. Stephen, where the Saint was buried, became a cathedral in 1731 but is now a grain exchange.

St. Gregory's relics were later translated to the basilica of St. Benignus the martyr, outside the walls of Dijon.

THE SOUL AFTER DEATH

THE MEANING OF TODAY'S "AFTER-DEATH" EXPERIENCES

If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. *Luke 16:31*

1. What do Today's Experiences "Prove"?

Thus we have seen that the "after-death" and "out-of-body" experiences which are so much under discussion today are quite distinct from the genuine experiences of the other world which have been manifested over the centuries in the lives of God-pleasing men and women. Further, the contemporary experiences have been so emphasized and have become so "fashionable" in recent years not because they are actually "new" (there were whole collections of similar experiences in 19th-century England and America), nor necessarily because they have been occurring with more frequency in these years, but chiefly because the public mind in the Western world, and especially in America, was "ready" for them. The public interest seems to be part of a widespread reaction against 20th-century materialism and unbelief, a sign of a more widespread interest in religion. Here we shall ask what the significance of this new "religious" interest might be.

But first, let us state once more what these experiences "prove" about the truth of religion. Most investigators seem to agree with Dr. Moody that the experiences do *not* corroborate the "conventional" Christian view of heaven (*Life after Life,* pp. 70, 98); even the experiences of those who *think*

they saw heaven do not hold up when compared with authentic visions of heaven in the past; even the experiences of hell are more "hints" than any kind of proof of the actual existence of hell.

One must therefore qualify as exaggerated the statement of Dr. Kubler-Ross that contemporary "after-death" research "will confirm what we have been taught for two thousand years—that there is life after death," and that it will help us "to know, rather than to believe" this (Foreword to *Life after Life,* pp. 7-8). Actually, these experiences may be said to "prove" no more than a minimum doctrine of the bare *survival* of the human soul outside the body, and of the bare *existence* of a non-material reality, while giving decisively *no* information on the further state or even existence of the soul after the first few minutes of "death," nor of the ultimate nature of the non-material realm. From this point of view the contemporary experiences are much less satisfactory than the accounts given over the centuries in Lives of Saints and other Christian sources; we know much more from these latter sources—provided, of course, that we trust those who have given this information to the same degree that the contemporary researchers trust those whom they have interviewed. But even so, our basic attitude towards the other world still remains one of *belief rather than knowledge;* we may know with reasonable certainty that there is "something" after death—but exactly what it is, we believe rather than know.

Further, that which Dr. Kubler-Ross and others of like mind think they know about life after death, based on "after-death" experiences, is in open contradiction to what Orthodox Christians believe about it, based on revealed Christian teaching and also on "after-death" experiences in Orthodox literature. The Christian after-death experiences all affirm the existence of heaven, hell, and judgment, of the need for repentance, struggle, and fear of losing one's soul eternally; while the contemporary experiences, like those of shamans, pagan initiates, and mediums, seem to point to a "summerland" of pleasant experiences in the "other world," where there is no judgment but only "growth," and death is

not to be feared but only welcomed as a "friend" that introduces one to the pleasures of "life after death."

We have already discussed in earlier chapters the reason for the difference in these two experiences: the Christian experience is of the genuinely other world of heaven and hell, while the spiritistic experience is only of the aerial part of *this* world, the "astral plane" of the fallen spirits. Today's experiences clearly belong to the latter category—but we could not know this unless we accepted (on faith) the Christian revelation of the nature of the other world. Similarly, if Dr. Kubler-Ross and other researchers accept (or are sympathetic to) a non-Christian interpretation of these experiences, it is not because today's experiences *prove* this interpretation, but because these researchers themselves *already have faith in a non-Christian interpretation of them.*

The significance of today's experiences, therefore, lies in the fact that they are becoming widely known at just the right time to serve as a "confirmation" of a non-Christian view of life after death; they are being used as part of a non-Christian religious movement. Let us look now more closely at the nature of this religious movement.

2. The Connection with Occultism

Over and over again, in the investigators of "after-death" experiences, one may see a more or less evident connection with occult ideas and practices. Here we may define "occult" (which literally refers to what is "hidden") as pertaining to any contacts of men with unseen spirits and powers in a way forbidden by God's revelation (see Leviticus 19:31, 20:6, etc.). This contact may be sought by men (as in spiritistic seances) or instigated by the fallen spirits (when they appear spontaneously to men). The opposite of "occult" is "spiritual" or "religious," which terms refer to that contact with God and His angels and saints which is permitted by God: prayer on man's part, and true, grace-giving manifestations of God, angels, and saints on the other.

As an example of this occult connection, Dr. Hans Holzer (*Beyond This Life*, Pinnacle Books, Los Angeles, 1977) finds the significance of "after-death" experiences

to lie in their opening men up to communication with the dead, and he finds them to give the same kind of messages as those provided by the "dead" at spiritistic seances. Dr. Moody, and indeed very many of today's researchers, as we have seen, look to occult texts such as the writings of Swedenborg and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* to explain today's experiences. Robert Crookall, perhaps the most scientific investigator in this field, uses the communications of mediums as one of his primary sources of information on the "other world." Robert Monroe and others involved in "out-of-body" experiences are open practitioners of occult experimentation, even to the extent of receiving guidance and advise from the "discarnate entities" they encounter.

Most symptomatic of all these investigators, perhaps, is the woman who has become the leading spokesman for the new attitude towards death which is emerging from today's "after-death" experiences: Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross.

No Christian, surely, can fail to sympathize with the cause which Dr. Kubler-Ross has chosen to champion: a humane and helpful attitude towards the dying, in contrast with the cold, helpless, and often fearful attitude which has often prevailed not only among doctors and nurses in hospitals, but even among clergymen who are supposed to have the "answer" to the questions raised by the fact of death. Since the publication of her book *On Death and Dying* (Macmillan Publishing Co., New York) in 1969, the whole subject of death has become much less a "taboo" one among medical professionals, helping also to create an intellectual atmosphere favorable to the discussion of what happens *after* death—a discussion which was set off in turn by the publication of Dr. Moody's first book in 1975. It is no accident that so many of the present books on life after death are accompanied by prefaces or at least brief comments by Dr. Kubler-Ross.

To be sure, anyone who accepts the traditional Christian view of life as a testing-ground for eternity, and death as the entrance into eternal blessedness or eternal misery, according to one's faith and life on earth—will find her book discouraging. To have a humane attitude toward a dying

person, to help him "prepare" for death, without placing faith in Christ and hope of salvation in the first place—is, when all is said and done, to remain in the same dreary realm of "humanism" to which mankind has been reduced by modern unbelief. The experience of dying can be made more pleasant than it usually is in today's hospitals; but if there is no knowledge of what comes after death, or that there *is* anything after death, the work of people like Kubler-Ross is reduced to the level of giving harmless colored pills to the incurably ill to make them at least *feel* that "something is being done."

In the course of her research, however (although she did not mention it in her first book), Dr. Kubler-Ross has indeed come across evidence that there is something after death. Although she has not yet published her own book of "after-death" experiences, she has made clear in her frequent lectures and interviews that she has seen enough to know *for certain* that there is life after death.

The chief source of her "knowledge" of this is, however, not the "after-death" experiences of others, but her own rather startling experiences with "spirits." Her first such experience occurred in her office at the University of Chicago in 1967, when she was discouraged and thinking of giving up her newly-begun research in death and dying. A woman came to her office and introduced herself as a patient who had died ten months before; Kubler-Ross was sceptical, but relates how she was finally persuaded by the "ghost": "She said she knew I was considering giving up my work with dying patients and that she came to tell me not to give it up . . . I reached out to touch her. I was reality-testing. I was a scientist, a psychiatrist, and I didn't believe in such things." She finally persuaded the "ghost" to write a note, and a later handwriting analysis confirmed that it was the handwriting of the deceased patient. Dr. Kubler-Ross states that this incident "came at a cross-roads where I would have made the wrong decision if I hadn't listened to her."* The dead never appear thus so matter-

* Interview by James Pearre of the Chicago Tribune, printed in the San Francisco *Sunday Examiner and Chronicle,* Nov. 14, 1976, Section B, p. 7.

of-factly among the living; this "other-worldly" visitation, if genuine, could only have been that of a fallen spirit out to deceive his victim. For such a spirit, the perfect imitation of human handwriting is an easy thing.

Later, Dr. Kubler-Ross' contacts with the "spirit-world" became much more intimate. In 1978, before an enthralled audience of 2200 in Ashland, Oregon, she related how she was first brought into contact with her "spirit guides." A spiritistic-type assembly was rather mysteriously arranged for her, evidently in southern California, with 75 people singing together in order to "raise the necessary energy to create this event. I was moved and touched that they would do that for me. Not more than two minutes later, I saw huge feet in front of me. There was an immense man standing in front of me." This "man" told her that she was to be a teacher and needed this first-hand experience to give her strength and courage for her work. "About a half-minute later, another person literally materialized about ½ inch from my feet . . . I understood that he was my guardian angel . . . He called me Isabelle, and he asked me if I remembered how, 2000 years ago, we both had worked with the Christ." Later a third "angel" appeared in order to teach her more about "joy." "My experience of these guides has been one of the greatest kind, of totally unconditional love. And I just want to tell you that we are never alone. Each of us has a guardian angel who is never more than two feet away from us at any time. And we can call on these beings. They will help us."**

At a holistic health conference in San Francisco in September, 1976, Dr. Kubler-Ross shared with an audience of 2300 physicians, nurses, and other medical professionals a "Profound mystical experience" that had occurred to her only the night before. (This experience is apparently the same one she described in Ashland.) "Last night, I was visited by Salem, my spirit guide, and two of his companions, Anka and Willie. They were with us until three o'clock in the morning. We talked, laughed and sang together. They spoke and touched me with the most incredible love and

** As reported by Gaea Laughingbird in *Berkeley Monthly*, June, 1978, p. 39.

tenderness imaginable. This was the highlight of my life." In the audience, "as she concluded, there was a momentary silence and then the mass of people rose as one in tribute. Most of the audience, largely physicians and other health care professionals, was seemingly moved to tears."*

It is well known in occult circles that "spirit guides" (who, of course, are the fallen spirits of the aerial realm) do not manifest themselves so readily unless a person is rather advanced in mediumistic receptivity. But perhaps even more striking than Dr. Kubler-Ross' involvement with "familiar spirits" is the enthusiastic response her accounts of this involvement produce on audiences composed, not of occultists and mediums, but of ordinary middle-class and professional people. Surely this is one of the religious "signs of the times": men have become receptive to contacts with the "spirit world" and are ready to accept the occult explanation of these contacts which contradict Christian truth.

Quite recently, extensive publicity has been given to scandals at Dr. Kubler-Ross' newly-established retreat in southern California, "Shanti Nilaya." According to these accounts, many of the "workshops" at Shanti Nilaya are centered on old-fashioned mediumistic seances, and a number of former participants have declared that the seances are fraudulent.** It may be that there is more wishful thinking than reality in Dr. Kubler-Ross' "spirit contacts"; but this does not affect the teaching which she and others are giving about life after death.

3. The Occult Teaching of Today's Investigators

The teaching on Life after Death of Dr. Kubler-Ross and other investigators of "after-death" experiences today may be summarized in a few points. Dr. Kubler-Ross, it should be noted, expresses these points with the certainty of someone who thinks she has had immediate experience of the "other world"; but scientists like Dr. Moody, while much

(*Continued on page* 266)

* Reported by Lennie Kronisch in *Yoga Journal,* September-October, 1976, pp. 18-20.

** See *The San Diego Union,* Sept. 2, 1979, pp. A-1, 3, 6, 14.

The Cross, Preserver of the Universe

In the Prophet Ezekiel (9:6) it is said that when the Angel of the Lord was sent to punish and destroy the sinning people, it was told him not to strike those on whom the "mark" had been made. In the original text this mark is called "tau," the Hebrew letter corresponding to the letter "T," which is how in ancient times the cross was made, which then was an instrument of punishment.

And so, even then was foretold the power of the Cross, which preserves those who venerate it. Likewise by many other events in the Old Testament the power of the Cross was indicated. Moses, who held his arms raised in the form of a cross during the battle, gave victory to the Israelites over the Amalekites. He also, dividing the Red Sea by a blow of his rod and by a transverse blow uniting the waters again, saved Israel from Pharaoh, who drowned in the water, while Israel crossed over on the dry bottom (Exodus, chs. 14, 17).

Through the laying on of his hands in the form of a cross on his grandsons, Jacob gave a blessing to his descendents, foretelling at the same time their future until the coming of the "expectation of the nations" (Genesis, ch. 48).

By the Cross the Son of God, having become man, accomplished our salvation. *He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross* (Phil. 2:8). Having stretched out His hands upon the Cross, the Saviour with them as it were embraced the world, and by His blood shed on it, like a king with red ink, He signd the forgiveness of the human race.

The Cross of the Lord was the instrument by which He saved the world after the fall into sin. Through the Cross He descended with His soul into hell so as to raise up from it the souls who were awaiting Him. By the

Cross Christ opened the doors of paradise which had been closed after our first ancestors had been banished from it. The Cross was sanctified by the Body of Christ which was nailed to it when He gave Himself over to torments and death for the salvation of the world, and it itself was then filled with life-giving power. By the Cross on Golgotha the prince of this world was cast out (John 12:31) and an end was put to his authority. The weapon by which he was crushed became the sign of Christ's victory.

The demonic hosts tremble when they see the Cross, for by the Cross the kingdom of hell was destroyed. They do not dare to draw near to anyone who is guarded by the Cross.

The whole human race, by the death of Christ on the Cross, received deliverance from the authority of the devil, and everyone who makes use of this saving weapon is inaccessible to the demons.

When legions of demons appeared to St. Anthony the Great and other desert-dwellers, they guarded themselves with the sign of the Cross, and the demons vanished.

When there appeared to St. Symeon the Stylite, who was standing on his pillar, what seemed to be a chariot to carry him to heaven, the Saint, before mounting it, crossed himself; it disappeared and the enemy, who had hoped to cast down the ascetic from the height of his pillar, was put to shame.

One cannot enumerate all the separate examples of the manifestation of the power of the Cross in various incidents. Invisibly and unceasingly there gushes from it the Divine grace that saves the world.

The sign of the Cross is made at all the Mysteries and prayers of the Church. With the making of the sign of the Cross over the bread and wine they become the Body and Blood of Christ. With the immersion of the Cross the waters are sanctified. The sign of the Cross looses us from sins. "When we are guarded by the Cross we oppose the enemy, not fearing his nets and barking." Just as the flaming sword in the hands of the Cherubim barred the entrance into paradise of old, so the Cross now acts invisibly in the world, guarding it from perdition.

The Cross is the unconquerable weapon of pious kings in the battle with enemies. Through the apparition of the Cross in the sky the dominion of Emperor Constantine was confirmed and an end was put to the persecution against the Church. The apparition of the Cross in the sky in Jerusalem in the days of Constantius the Arian proclaimed the victory of Orthodoxy. By the power of the Cross of the Lord Christian kings reign and will reign until Antichrist, barring his path to power and restraining lawlessness (St. John Chrysostom, Commentary on II Thes. 2:6-7).

The "sign of the Son of Man" (Matt. 24:30), that is, the Cross, will appear in the sky in order to proclaim the end of the present world and the coming of the eternal Kingdom of the Son of God. Then all the tribes of the earth shall weep, because they loved the present age and its lusts, but all who have endured persecution for righteousness and called on the name of the Lord shall rejoice and be glad. The Cross then will save from eternal perdition all who conquered temptations by the Cross, who crucified their flesh with its passions and lusts, and took up their cross and followed after Christ.

But those who hated the Cross of the Lord and did not engrave the Cross in their soul will perish forever. For "the Cross is the preserver of the whole universe, the Cross is the beauty of the Church, the Cross is the might of kings, the Cross is the confirmation of the faithful, the Cross is the glory of angels and the scourge of demons" (*Octoechos:* Exapostilarion, Monday Matins).

Shanghai
Exaltation of the Cross, 1947

THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCH'S PRAYER

The Church is the union of all who confess the true faith in the true God, with the Lord Jesus Christ at her head, having as her aim the spiritual perfection of each of her members.

The Church is called catholic, that is, universal, as embracing everything.

In the Church of Christ *there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free* (Col. 3:11); the Church encompasses all peoples; into her enter people of all places and times, living and dead, and even the angels.

Therefore, all members of the Church can and should participate in the Church's prayers. At the Liturgy, that is, the "common service," the Bloodless Sacrifice is offered for all the faithful, living and dead.

And besides this, the Church offers up separate prayers also for all who are in misfortune in various special circumstances, and for the reposed, calling on her living members to remember with fervor those who have departed into the other life, asking of God forgiveness of the sins they have committed and eternal blessedness in the Kingdom of God.

September 10, 1944
Saturday before the
Exaltation of the Cross

(*Continued from page* 263)

more cautious and tentative in tone, cannot help but promote the same teaching. This is the teaching on life after death that has entered the air of the late 20th century and seems unaccountably "natural" to all students of it who do not have a firm grasp on any other teaching.

(1) *Death is not to be feared.* Dr. Moody writes: "In some form or other, almost every person has expressed to me the thought that he is no longer afraid of death" (*Life after Life*, p. 68). Dr. Kubler-Ross relates: "Recorded histories reveal that dying is painful but death itself . . . is a totally peaceful experience, free of pain and fear. Everyone, without exception, describes a feeling of equanimity and wholeness."* One may see here the basic trust in one's psychic experiences that characterizes all who are deceived by the fallen spirits. There is nothing whatever in today's "after-death" experiences to indicate that death itself will be merely a repetition of them, and that not for a few minutes only, but *permanently;* this trust of pleasant psychic experiences is part of the religious spirit that is now in the air, and it produces a false sense of well-being that is fatal to spiritual life.

(2) *There is no judgment to come, and no hell.* Dr. Moody reports, on the basis of his interviews, that "in most cases, the reward-punishment model of the afterlife is abandoned and disavowed, even by many who had been accustomed to thinking in those terms. They found, much to their amazement, that even when their most apparently awful and sinful deeds were made manifest before the being of light, the being responded not with anger and rage, but rather only with understanding, and even with humor" (*Life after Life,* p. 70). Dr. Kubler-Ross observes of her interviewees, in a more doctrinaire tone: "All have a sense of 'wholeness.' God is not judgmental; man is" (Kemf, p. 52). It does not seem even to occur to such investigators that this absence of judgment in "after-death" experiences might be a misleading first impression, or that the first few minutes

* As reported by Elizabeth Kemf in *East-West Journal,* March, 1978, p. 52.

of death are not the place for judgment; they are merely interpreting the experiences in accordance with the religious spirit of the times, which does not wish to believe in judgment and hell.

(3) *Death is not as unique and final an experience as Christian doctrine has described it, but is rather only a harmless transition to a "higher state of consciousness."* Dr. Kubler-Ross thus defines it: "Death is simply a shedding of the physical body, like the butterfly coming out of a cocoon. It is a transition into a higher state of consciousness, where you continue to perceive, to understand, to laugh, to be able to grow, and the only thing you lose is something that you don't need anymore, and that is your physical body. It's like putting away your winter coat when spring comes . . . and that's what death is about" (Kemf, p. 50). We shall state below how this contrasts with the true Christian teaching.

(4) *The purpose of life on earth, and of life after death, is not the eternal salvation of one's soul, but an unlimited process of "growth" in "love" and "understanding" and "self-realization.'* Dr. Moody finds that "many seemed to have returned with a new model and a new understanding of the world beyond—a vision which features not unilateral judgmnt, but rather co-operative development towards the ultimate end of self-realization. According to these new views, development of the soul, especially in the spiritual faculties of love and knowledge, does not stop upon death. Rather it continues on the other side, perhaps eternally . . .' (*Life after Life,* p. 70). Such an occult view of life and death does not come from the fragmentary experiences being publicized today; rather, it comes from the occult *philosophy* that is in the air today.

(5) *"After-death" and "out-of-body" experiences are themselves a preparation for life after death.* The traditional Christian preparation for eternal life (faith, repentance, participating in the Sacraments, spiritual struggle) is of little importance compared with the increased "love" and "understanding" which are inspired by "after-death" experiences; and specifically (as in the recent program worked out by Kubler-Ross and Robert Monroe) one can train terminally-ill

persons in "out-of-body" experiences "so that the persons will quickly gain a perception of what awaits them on the Other Side when they die" (Wheeler, *Journey to the Other Side*, p. 92). One of Dr. Moody's interviewees states categorically. "The reason why I'm not afraid to die is that I know where I'm going when I leave here, because I've been there before" (*Life after Life*, p. 69). What a tragic and ill-founded optimism!

Every one of these five points is part of the teaching of 19th-century Spiritulism as revealed at that time by the "spirits" themselves through mediums. It is a teaching literally devised by demons with the single clear intention of overthrowing the traditional Christian teaching on life after death and changing mankind's whole outlook on religion. The occult philosophy that almost invariably accompanies and colors today's "after-death" experiences is simply a filtering down to the popular level of the esoteric Spiritism of the Victorian age; it is a symptom of the evaporation of genuine Christian views from the minds of the masses of the Western world. The "after-death" experience itself, one may say, is incidental to the occult philosophy that is being spread through it; the experience promotes the philosophy not because its content as such is occult, but because the basic Christian safeguards and teaching that once protected men from such a foreign philosophy have now largely been removed, and virtually *any* experience of the "other world" will now be used for promoting occultism. In the 19th century only a few freethinkers and unchurched people believed in this occult philosophy; but now it is so much in the air that anyone who does not have a conscious philosophy of his own is drawn to accept it quite "naturally."

4. The "Message" of Today's "After-Death" Experiences

But why, finally, are "after-death" experiences so much "in the air" today, and what is their meaning as part of the "spirit of the times"? The most obvious reason for the increased discussion of these experiences today is the invention in recent years of new techniques for resuscitating the "clinically dead," which have made such experiences more commonly

reported than ever before. This explanation, to be sure, does help to account for the quantitative increase of "after-death" reports, but it is too superficial to account for the spiritual impact of these experiences on mankind and the changing view of life after death which they are helping to cause.

A deeper explanation is to be found in the increasing openness and sensitivity of men to "spiritual" and "psychic" experiences in general, under the greatly increased influence of occult ideas on the one hand, and on the other hand the waning both of humanistic materialism and of Christian faith. Mankind is coming once more to an acceptance of the possibility of contact with "another world."

Further, this "other world" itself seems to be *opening itself up more to a mankind that is eager to experience it.* Th "occult explosion" of recent years has been produced by—and in turn has helped to produce—a spectacular increase in actual "paranormal" experiences of all kinds. "After-death" experiences are at one end of the spectrum of these experiences, involving little or no conscious will to contact the "other world"; the activities of contemporary witchcraft and satanism are at the other end of the spectrum, involving a conscious attempt to contact and even serve the powers of the "other world"; and the myriad varieties of today's psychic experiences, from the "spoon-bending" of Uri Geller and parapsychological experiments in "out-of-body" travel and the like, to contact with and abductions by "UFO" beings—fall somewhere in between these extremes. Significantly, a large number of these "paranormal" experiences have been occurring to "Christians," and one kind of these experiences ("charismatic" ones) is widely accepted as a genuinely Christian phenomenon.* In actuality, however, the "Christian" involvement in all such experiences is only a striking indication of the extent to which the Christian awareness of occult experience has been lost in our times.

One of the foremost authentic mediums of the 20th century, the late Arthur Ford—whose increase in respect-

* An examination of the "charismatic" movement as a mediumistic phenomenon may be read in *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future,* St. Herman Monastery Press, 1979, ch. VII.

ability among "Christians" and unbelieving humanists alike is itself one of the "signs of the times"—has given a revealing hint as to what the increasing acceptance of and susceptibility to occult experiences means: "The day of the professional medium is about over. We've been useful as guinea pigs. Through us, scientists have learned something about the conditions necessary for it (contact with the "spirit world") to happen."** That is: the occult experience hitherto restricted to a few "initiates" has now become accessible to thousands of ordinary people. Of course, it is not chiefly science that has brought this about. but mankind's increasing estrangement from Christianity and its thirst for new "religious experiences." Fifty or seventy-five years ago, only mediums and cultists on the fringes of society had contact with "spirit guides," cultivated "out-of-body" experiences, or "spoke in tongues"; today these experiences have become relatively common and are accepted as ordinary on all levels of society.

This marked increase in "other worldly" experiences today is doubtless one of the signs of the approaching end of this world. St. Gregory the Great, after describing various visions and experiences of life after death in his *Dialogues,* remarks that "the spiritual world is moving closer to us, manifesting itself through visions and revelations . . . As the present world approaches its end, the world of eternity looms nearer . . . The end of the world merges with the beginning of eternal life" (*Dialogues* IV, 43, p. 251).

St. Gregory adds, however, that through these visions and revelations (which are much more common in our time than they were in his) we still see the truths of the future life imperfectly, because the light is still "dim and pale, like the light of the sun in the early hours of the day just before dawn." How true this is of today's "after-death" experiences! Never before has mankind been given such striking and clear proofs—or at least "hints"—that there is another world, that life does not end with the death of the body, that there is a soul that survives death and is indeed more conscious

** *Psychics,* by the Editors of *Psychic Magazine,* Harper & Row, N.Y., 1972, p. 23.

and alive *after* death. For a person with a clear grasp of Christian doctrine, today's "after-death" experiences can only be a striking confirmation of the Christian teaching on the state of the soul immediately after death; and even today's occult experiences can only confirm for him the existence and nature of the aerial realm of fallen spirits.

But for the rest of mankind, including most of that part that still calls itself Christian, today's experiences, far from confirming the truths of Christianity are proving to be a subtle pointer to deception and false teaching, a preparation for the coming reign of Antichrist. Truly, even those who return from the "dead" today cannot persuade mankind to repent: *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead* (Luke 16:31). In the end, it is only those who are faithful to "Moses and the Prophets"—that is, to the fullness of revealed truth—who are able to understand the true meaning of today's experiences. What the rest of mankind learns from these experiences is not repentance and the closeness of God's judgment—but a strange, enticing new gospel of pleasant "other-worldly" experiences and the abolition of something which God has set up for the awakening of man to the reality of the true other world of heaven and hell: *the fear of death*.

Arthur Ford makes quite clear that the whole mission of mediums like himself has been "to use whatever special talents given me to remove for all time the fear of the death passage from earth minds."* This is the message of Dr. Kubler-Ross also, and it is the "scientific" conclusion of researchers like Dr. Moody: the "other world" is pleasant, one need not fear to enter it. Two centuries ago Emanuel Swedenborg summed up the "spirituality" of those who believe like this: "I have been permitted to enjoy not only the pleasures of the body and the senses, like those who live in the world, but I have also been permitted to enjoy such delights and felicities of life as, I believe, no persons in the whole world ever before enjoyed, which were greater and more

* Arthur Ford, *The Life Beyond Death*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1971, p. 158.

exquisite than any person could imagine and believe . . . Believe me, if I knew that the Lord would call me to Himself tomorrow, I would summon the musicians today, in order to be once more really gay in this world." When he foretold the date of his death to his landlady, he was as pleased "as if he was going to have a holiday, to go to some merry-making."**

We shall contrast this attitude now with the true Christian attitude towards death over the centuries. Here we shall see how perilous it is for a soul to have no discernment with regard to "spiritual experiences," to cast aside the safeguards of Christian teaching!

5. The Christian Attitude Towards Death

The occult teaching on life after death, although it ends so far from the truth of things, does begin with an undoubted Christian truth: the death of the body is not the end of human life, but only the beginning of a new condition for the human personality, which continues its existence apart from the body. Death, which was not made by God but was brought into the creation by Adam's sin in Paradise, is the most striking form in which man faces the fallenness of his nature. A person's fate for eternity depends largely on how he regards his own death and how he prepares for it.

The true Christian attitude towards death has in it elements both of fear and uncertainty, just those emotions which occultism wishes to abolish. However, in the Christian attitude there is nothing of the abject fear which can be present in those who die with no hope of eternal life, and a Christian with his conscience at peace approaches death calmly and, according to God's grace, even with a certain sense of assurance. Let us look at the Christian death of several of the great monastic Saints of 5th-century Egypt.

"When the time came for the repose of St. Agatho, he spent three days in profound heedfulness to himself, con-

** Quoted in George Trobridge, *Swedenborg: Life and Teaching*, Swedenborg Foundation, New York, 1968, pp. 175, 276.

versing with no one. The brethren asked him: 'Abba Agatho, where are you'? 'I am standing before the judgment of Christ,' he answered. The brethren said: 'Are even you afraid, Father'? He replied: 'I have striven according to my strength to keep God's commandments, but I am a man, and how do I know that my deeds have been pleasing to God'? The brethren asked: 'Do you really have no hope in your way of life, which was in accordance with the will of God'? 'I cannot have such hope,' he replied, 'because one thing is the judgment of man, and another is the judgment of God.' They wished to ask him yet more, but he told them: 'Show love to me, and do not speak with me now, for I am not free.' And he died with joy. 'We saw him rejoicing,' his disciples related, 'as if he were meeting and greeting dear friends.'"*

Even great saints who die in the midst of obvious signs of God's grace retain a sobering humility about their own salvation. "When the time came for the great Sisoes to die, his face became illuminated and he said to the Fathers who were sitting with him: 'Here Abba Anthony has come.' After being silent for a little, he said: 'Here the choir of the prophets has come.' Then he became yet brighter and said: 'Here the choir of apostles has come.' And again, his face became twice as shining; he began to speak with someone. The Elders asked him to say with whom he was speaking. He replied: 'The angels have come to take me, but I am imploring them to leave me for a short time for repentance.' The Elders said to him: 'Father, you have no need for repentance.' He replied to them: 'In truth, I do not know whether I have even placed a beginning of repentance.' But everyone knew that he was perfect. Thus spoke and felt a true Christian, despite the fact that during his lifetime he had raised the dead at his mere word and was filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And again his face shone yet more; it shone like the sun. All were afraid. He said to them: 'Behold, the Lord has come and uttered: "Bring me the chosen vessel from the desert."' With these words he sent forth his spirit. Lightning was seen, and the room was filled with

* *Patericon of Scetis*, quoted in Bishop Ignatius, vol. III, pp. 107-8.

fragrance" (*Patericon of Scetis,* Bishop Ignatius, vol. III, p. 110).

How different this profound and sober Christian attitude is when compared with the superficial attitude of some non-Orthodox Christians today who think they are already "saved" and will not even undergo the judgment of all men, and therefore have nothing to fear in death. Such an attitude, very widespread among present-day Protestants, is actually not too far from the occult idea that death is not to be feared because there is no damnation; certainly, even though inadvertently, it has helped give rise to the latter attitude. Blessed Theophylactus of Bulgaria, in his 11th-century commentary on the Gospels, wrote of such ones: "Many deceive themselves with a vain hope; they think that they will receive the Kingdom of Heaven and will unite themselves to the choir of those reposing in the height of virtues, having exalted fancies of themselves in their hearts . . . Many are called, because God calls many, indeed everyone; but few are chosen, few are saved, few are worthy of God's choosing" (Commentary on Matt. 22:14).

The similarity between occult philosophy and the common Protestant view is perhaps the chief reason why the attempts of some Evangelical Protestants (see Bibliography) to criticize today's "after-death" experiences from the point of view of "Biblical Christianity" has been so unsuccessful. These critics themselves have lost so much of the traditional Christian teaching on life after death, the aerial realm, and the activities and deceptions of demons, that their criticisms are often vague and arbitrary; and their discernment in this realm is often no better than that of the secular researchers and causes them also to be taken in by deceptive "Christian" or "Biblical" experiences in the aerial realm.

The true Christian attitude towards death is based upon an awareness of the critical differences between this life and the next. Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow has summed up the Scriptural and Patristic teaching on this point in these words: "Death is the boundary at which the time of struggles ends for man and the time of recompense begins, so that after death neither repentence nor correction of life

is possible for us. Christ the Saviour expressed this truth in His parable of the rich man and Lazarus, from which it is clear that both the one and the other immediately after death received their recompense, and the rich man, no matter how much he was tormented in hell, could not be delivered from his sufferings through repentence (Luke 16:26)."*

Death, therefore, is precisely the reality that awakens one to the difference between this world and the next and inspires one to undertake the life of repentence and cleansing while this precious time is given to us. When St. Abba Dorotheus was asked by a certain brother why he spent his time carelessly in his cell, he replied: "Because you have not understood either the awaited repose or the future torment. If you knew them as you should, you would endure and not grow weak even though your cell should be filled with worms and you would be standing among them up to your neck."**

Similarly, St. Seraphim of Sarov, in our own modern times, taught: "Oh, if only you could know what joy, what sweetness await the souls of the righteous in heaven, then you would be determined in this temporal life to endure any sorrow, persecution, and calumny with gratitude. If this very cell of ours were full of worms, and if these worms were to eat our flesh throughout our whole temporal life, then with utmost desire we should consent to it, only not to be deprived of that heavenly joy which God has prepared for those who love Him."***

The fearlessness of occultists and Protestants alike before death is the direct result of their lack of awareness of what awaits them in the future life and of what can be done now to prepare for it. For this reason, true experiences or visions of life after death generally have the effect of shaking one to the depths of one's being and (if one has not been leading a zealous Christian life) of changing his whole life to make preparation for the life to come. When St.

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* Metr. Macarius, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. II, p. 524.
** Abba Dorotheus, *Soul-Profiting Instructions*, Holy Trinity Lavra, 1900. Instruction 12: "On the Fear of Future Torment," p. 137.
*** *The Spiritual Instructions of St. Seraphim of Sarov*, St. Herman of Alaska Monastery Press, 1973, p. 69.

Athanasius of the Kiev Caves died and came back to life after two days, his fellow monks "were terrified seeing him come back to life; then they began to ask how he had come back to life, and what he had seen and heard while he had been apart from the body. To all questions he answered only with the words: 'Save yourselves'! And when the brethren insistently asked him to tell them something profitable, he gave as his testament to them obedience and ceaseless repentance. Right after this Athanasius closed himself up in a cave, remained in it without leaving for twelve years, spending day and night in unceasing tears, eating a little bread and water every other day, and conversing with no one during all this time. When the hour of his death came, he repeated to the assembled brethren his instruction on obedience and repentance, and died with peace in the Lord."*

Similarly, in the West, Venerable Bede relates how the man of Northumbria, after being dead one whole night, came back to life and said: "I have truly risen from the grasp of death, and I am allowed to live among men again. But henceforth I must not live as I used to, and must adopt a very different way of life." He gave away all his possessions and retired to a monastery. Later he related that he had seen both heaven and hell, but "this man of God would not discuss these and other things that he had seen with any apathetic or careless-living people, but only with those who were haunted by fear of punishment or gladdened by the hope of eternal joys, and were willing to take his words to heart and grow in holiness."**

Even in our own modern times, the author of "Unbelievable for Many" was so shaken by his true experience of the other world that he entirely changed his life, became a monk, and wrote his account of his experiences in order to awaken others like himself who were living in the false security of unbelief about the next life.

Such experiences are numerous in Lives of Saints and

* As related by Bishop Ignatius, vol. III, p. 129; see his Life in the *Kiev-Caves Patericon,* Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, N.Y., 1967, pp. 153-5. St. Athanasius, called "the Resurrected," is commemorated on December 2.

** Bede, *A History of the English Church and People,* Book V, 12, pp. 289, 293.

other Orthodox sources, and they stand in sharp contrast to the experiences of people today who have seen "heaven" and the "other world" and yet remain in the false security that they are already "prepared" for life after death and that death itself is nothing to be feared.

The place of the remembrance of death in Christian life may be seen in the manual of Christian struggle, *The Ladder* of St. John (whose Sixth Step is devoted specifically to this): "As of all foods bread is the most essential, so the thought of death is the most necessary of all works . . . It is impossible to spend the present day devoutly unless we regard it as the last of our whole life" (Step 6:4, 24). The Scripture well states: *In all you do, remember the end of your life, and then you will never sin* (Sirach 7:36). The great St. Barsanuphius of Gaza gave as his advice to a brother: "Let your thoughts be strengthened with the remembrance of death, the hour of which is not known to any man. Let us strive to do good before we depart from this life—for we do not know on what day we shall be called—lest we turn out to be unprepared and remain outside the bridal chamber with the five foolish virgins" (St. Barsanuphius, Answer 799).

The great Abba Pimen, when he heard of the death of St. Arsenius the Great of Egypt, said: "Blessed is Arsenius! You wept over yourself for the course of earthly life! If we do not weep over ourselves here, we shall weep eternally. It is not possible to escape weeping: either here, voluntarily, or there, in torments, involuntarily" (*Patericon of Scetis,* in Bishop Ignatius, vol. III, p. 108).

Only a person with this sober Christian outlook on life can dare to say, with the Apostle Paul, that he has *a desire to depart, and to be with Christ* (Phil. 1:23). Only he who has lived the Christian life of struggle, repentance, and weeping over one's sins, can say with St. Ambrose of Milan: "The foolish are afraid of death as the greatest of evils, but wise men seek it as a rest after their toils and as the end of evils."*

Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov concludes his celebrated "Homily on Death" with words that can stand for us also,

* St. Ambrose, "Death as a Good," 8:32, in *Seven Exegetical Works,* tr. by Michael P. McHugh, Catholic University of America Press, 1972, Fathers of the Church, vol. 65, p. 94.

a hundred years later, as a call to return to the one and only true Christian attitude towards death, putting away all rosy illusions of our present spiritual state as well as all false hopes for the future life:

"Let us arouse in ourselves the remembrance of death by visiting cemeteries, visiting the sick, being present at the death and burial of our close ones, by frequently examining and renewing in our memories various contemporary deaths which we have heard of or seen . . . Having understood the shortness of our earthly life and the vanity of all earthly acquisitions and advantages; having understood the frightful future that awaits those who have disdained the Redeemer and redemption and have offered themselves entirely as a sacrifice to sin and corruption—let us turn our mental eyes away from their steady gazing at the deceptive and enchanting beauty of the world which easily catches the weak human heart and forces it to love and serve it; let us turn them to the fearful but saving spectacle of the death that awaits us. Let us weep over ourselves while there is time; let us wash, let us cleanse with tears and confession our sins which are written in the books of the Sovereign of the world. Let us acquire the grace of the Holy Spirit—this seal, this sign of election and salvation; it is indispensable for a free passage through the spaces of the air and for entrance into the heavenly gates and mansions . . . O ye who have been banished from Paradise! It is not for enjoyments, not for festivity, not for playing that we find ourselves on earth—but in order that by faith, repentance. and the Cross we might kill the death which has killed us and restore to ourselves the lost Paradise! May the merciful Lord grant the readers of this Homily, and him who has composed it, to remember death during this earthly life, and by the remembrance of it, by the mortification of oneself to everything vain, and by a life lived for eternity, to banish from oneself the fierceness of death when its hour shall come, and through it to enter into the blessed, eternal, true life. Amen." (Vol. III, pp. 181-183.)

Next Issue: Summary of the Orthodox Doctrine on the Fate of the Soul after Death.

SAINT SYMEON THE NEW THEOLOGIAN

HOMILY 38

The Fall of Adam and the Decrees of God

1. EACH OF US MUST RECOGNIZE THAT HE IS ADAM IN ORDER TO BE OF CHRIST.

IF ANY OF US does not recognize that he is Adam, the one who sinned before God in Paradise, how can he recognize and think that the coming down of the Son and Word of God was for him? A law was established after the Fall, that just as each of us is Adam, that is, a corruptible and mortal man, not by reason of our own sin, but by reason of the disobedience of our first ancestor Adam, from whose seed we come; so each of us is of Christ, immortal and incorrupt, not for the sake of our own virtues, but for the sake of the obedience of the second Adam, Who is Christ our Lord Who came down from Heaven; we become bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. And just as corruption and death come down from generation to generation from the old Adam, so also incorruption and immortality come down to Christians from the new Adam. Just as the fact that we are participants in the nature of our ancestor Adam who fell is recognized by the sign that we also sin and transgress the commandments of God, so also the fact that we are participants of the Divine grace of the second Founder of our race, Christ the Lord, we recognize by this sign: that we no longer sin as soon as we receive this Divine grace.* We

*Ed. note: St. Symeon himself in other Homilies makes it clear that he, and Christians in general, remain sinners before God and continue to sin. Therefore, his meaning here is not that Orthodox Christians never sin, but that they do not sin *as long as Christ's grace is active in them*: when a Christian falls into sin, it is a sign that grace has left him. The whole struggle of Christian life, as St. Symeon teaches (Homily 2, section 3) is to *preserve God's* grace and (when we find ourselves losing it) to re-acquire it. This is the same as the teaching of the Apostle John that *whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin* (I John 3:9), and yet *if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (I John 1:8).

draw from the fullness of Christ, just as from some kind of source of fire a myriad of lights might be lit. And the more of them are lit, the more the source abounds in fire and gushes it forth from itself: for Christ, being God, is superabundant in every good.

2. THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION OF THE SON AND WORD OF GOD HAS AS ITS AIM TO RECREATE THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM, AND MAKE THEM INCORRUPT AND IMMORTAL

He, not shunning everything existing, deigned to go into the most pure womb of the Ever-Virgin, to be born, to be nourished with milk, to grow and become a man, likewise to thirst, to hunger, to be weighed down by labors, to pour our sweat; then to be subjected to the envy of the Jews for the miracles which He performed in showing His Divinity, to be hung upon the Cross as if He were an evildoer, together with thieves, to die a shameful death by His own will, to be buried, to rise again, and to ascend into Heaven so as to send down upon believers the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from the Father, Whom indeed He sent. For it was the aim and end of the entire Dispensation of Christ's Incarnation that the Holy Spirit might be received in the souls of those who believe in Christ as God and man, a single Christ in two natures, Divine and human, indivisible and unconfused, so that this Holy Spirit might be as it were the soul of the soul of believers, and that they for this reason might be called Christians, and so that (by the activity of this Holy Spirit) they, to some extent, might be recast, recreated, renewed and sanctified, in mind, conscience, and in all their senses, so that after this they should no longer have in themselves any kind of corrupt life which could raise in their souls an inclination and desire for fleshly enjoyments and worldly lusts.

Every man, from the first day of his birth (from the moment of his conception), is already subject to corruption and death, and there is required a great and Divine power so as to recreate him for incorruption and immortality. If anyone, together with the growth of his body, should grow also in evil, in him, of course, the power of corruption and the dominion of death also increase and become even more powerful. This is so because according to the measure of the corruption which one develops in oneself, the sting of death also enters into one to a greater or lesser extent. If now a small and innocent child has need of Divine power so as to be delivered from corruption, then what greater power is required for one who together with his growth in age has grown also in evil, and together with it and through it has grown also in corruption? This corrup-

tion is what the ancestor of God, David, calls in his Psalms bonds and sackcloth, when he calls out to God, *Thou hast broken my bonds asunder; I shall offer a sacrifice of praise unto Thee* (Ps. 115:7-8); that is, I shall give thanks to Thee and glorify Thee because Thou hast loosed my bonds, that is, corruption. And again, *Thou didst rend my sackcloth and didst gird me with gladness, that my glory may chant unto Thee, and that I may not be pierced with sorrow* (Ps. 29:12, 13); that is, Thou hast divested me of the sackcloth which I was wearing, that is, corruption, and girded me with joy, that I might glorify Thee — not I, but the Holy Spirit through me — because the joy and glory received by David from God was the Holy Spirit; and having Him within himself, he says, *that I may not be pierced with sorrow* (I shall have no need to repent), that is, I shall not sin.

And so, it is absolutely necessary for everyone to use all possible efforts so as to receive from above, from Christ God, this rejoicing and glory, that is, the grace of the Holy Spirit, in order to have power to sin no more. For that which anyone does out of free will he may also annihilate through free will; but what is from nature cannot be annihilated by free will. If now man has become corrupt and mortal in nature, he cannot by the power of free will alone become incorruptible and immortal. And from the time of the banishment of Adam from Paradise, that is, from the time when he became corruptible and mortal by reason of his transgression, even up to the present day, not a single man has ever been incorrupt and immortal.

3. THE DECREES OF GOD BECOME THE LAW OF NATURE

And thus, if it is needful for man again to come into the original condition in which he was created, that is, to become incorrupt, no human free will whatsoever can raise him up into this condition, but only a Divine power received by him through a mingling with the Divine nature. The Divine nature is powerful to conquer the mortality of human nature, and to call him again into his original condition. The words and decrees of God become the law of nature. Therefore, the decree of God uttered by Him as a result of the disobedience of the first Adam, the decree to him of death and corruption, became a law of nature eternal and unchanging. Therefore, for the abolition of this decree, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, was crucified and died, offering Himself as a sacrifice for the redemption of man from death, a sacrifice frightful and infinitely great. The decree of God, *Thou art dust, and to the dust shalt thou return,* just like everything laid upon man after the Fall, will be in effect until the

end of the age. But by God's mercy, through the power of the extraordinary sacrifice of Christ, in the future age it will no longer have any effect, when the general resurrection will occur, which resurrection could not possibly occur unless the Son of God Himself had risen from the dead, Who had died for the abolition of the above-mentioned decree and for the resurrection of the entire human nature, since He Who rose was a man, that is, Christ, just as the one who originally died was a man, that is, Adam, both the one and the other including in themselves the whole human race.

4. WHICH DECREES OF GOD ARE AGAIN ABOLISHED BY HIM, AND BY WHAT MEANS?

However, let everyone know that after the Dispensation of the Incarnation (of Christ), there is time to abolish still in this life the decrees of God which concern chastisements for sins. The decrees of God which were laid upon the first man Adam, who sinned in Paradise while he was leading a life without care, are rightly not abolished in this life and are set down for mankind as a law of nature. But the decrees of Christ, after the Dispensation of the Incarnation, which were laid upon us who are in this miserable life, can yet be abolished in this age. And every Christian, if he has fallen under them, should take care with all fervor and effort that they might be removed from him while he is still here; for they are incomparably more terrible than the former decrees, since they are extended unto unending ages. If the former decrees, which deprived man of temporal life, that is, the decrees of death and corruption, seem unbearable, then the decree of eternal and unending punishments which will be imposed in the future age will be all the more heavy and unbearable for those who will have to experience them!

What precisely these decrees are, listen now. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, *Whosoever shall say to his brother, thou fool, shall be in danger of the gehenna of fire* (Matt. 5:22). This means that one who has said this to his brother, as soon as he has said it, immediately has already become subject to eternal torment. But this decision or decree of God's judgment loses effect as soon as one repents and resolves with such determination no longer to say to one's brother, "thou fool," that he would rather die than to call one's brother-Christian "thou fool." In the same way, that is, through repentance, contrition, and the determination to refrain from sins, all other decrees of Christ's judgment also lose effect.

But let it be known to us that only here in the present life where there is a transgression of God's commandments, only here is there the abolition of the frightful decrees of judgment for them, because of God's limitless mercy

and for the sake of sincere and perfect repentance. But upon him who does not repent here these decrees shall unfailingly be fulfilled. Without fail, he who worships God in unrighteousness will be punished as an impious one; he who looks upon a woman with lust will be punished as a fornicator; the extortioner will be punished as an idol-worshipper. Moreover, if someone were to repent of such or similar sins, but at the same time should be unmerciful, without compassion and hard-hearted, that is, should return evil for evil and not forgive his enemy — in such a case he will not receive any benefit whatever from his repentance, but all his repentance will be in vain, according to the decree of the Lord Who says, *With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged* (Matt. 7:2). And not only this, but something even worse may happen: It may happen that someone, having sincerely repented, will obtain mercy from God and receive the forgiveness of all his debt of sin; but if after this he will be uncompassionate and unmerciful to others and will not forgive them in whatever they have sinned against him, he himself will dissolve the merciful condenscension of God to him as well as the forgiveness which was manifested to him by God, as the Holy Gospel says: *Shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors* (Matt. 18:33-34).

May the Lord grant us to repent of our sins, and be compassionate and merciful to our neighbors, that we may be vouchsafed to receive also eternal blessedness in Christ Himself, the True God, to Whom may there be glory forever. Amen.

LETTERS

(Continued)

Metropolitan Alexis, who is very accomodating to the secular authorities.

Sound the alarm! Silence, compromises—are not a tactical step but a betrayal. This is beginning to be understood by those who up to now have not understood, but somehow love the Church.

Your Priest Dimitry Dudko
(Novoye Russkoye Slovo,
Jan. 22, 1980)

Following Fr. Dimitry's arrest, hierarchs of the Russian Church Outside of Russia have called on the faithful to offer fervent prayer for him and others now imprisoned in Soviet Russia. Here is part of the Ukase promulgated in one Diocese to all priests:

UKASE NO. 1-80

The Gospel reading for the coming Sunday (Meat-fare Sunday) reminds us especially of compassion for those in prison. "I was in prison, and ye visited Me," the Lord says to the merciful; and to the unmerciful: "I was sick and in prison, and ye did not visit Me."

In our Homeland now there has appeared a new wave of persecutions. The Synod of Bishops calls on everyone to pray for those imprisoned.

Therefore, on Meat-fare Sunday, Jan. 28/Feb. 10, I call on you in all churches after the Liturgy to serve a moleben for those in prison. We will commemorate: Priest Dimitry (Dudko), Priest Gleb (Yakunin), Priest Basil, Igor (Ogurtsov), Alexander (Ogorodnikov), Vladimir . . . and all, everyone who is imprisoned and suffers with them.

The Chairman of the Committee for the Defense of Persecuted Orthodox Christians, Priest Victor Potapov, has organized aid for the needy Matushkas of Fr. Dimitry Dudko and Fr. Gleb Yakunin. For this purpose I give my blessing for a special collection to be made in churches on Meat-fare Sunday.

Archbishop Anthony
Diocese of Western America
and San Francisco
Russian Orthodox Church
Outside of Russia

Contributions for this purpose may also be sent direct to:
Committee for the Defense of
Persecuted Orthodox Christians
P.O. Box 9669
Washington, D.C. 20016

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(Signature) Father Seraphim

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